

## **China-Africa FOCAC Summit: how China can help African countries advance peace in the 2030 Agenda**

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**The sixth meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation provides an opportunity to deepen partnership, address collective challenges, and enable African countries to make significant progress towards the peace-related targets in the 2030 Agenda.**

The inclusion of peace as a cross-cutting issue in the recently adopted [UN 2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development could hardly be more pertinent for Africa – and for the wider world – in the wake of attacks in Mali, France, and Lebanon, the rapidly escalating violence in Syria, and continued instability in places such as South Sudan, Central African Republic, Burundi and others. Indeed, the links between conflict, insecurity and underdevelopment remain especially pertinent to many African countries still struggling with high levels of inequality and a population eager to gain access to opportunities.

The 2030 Agenda's strong focus on conflict prevention, particularly in Goal 16, could support a shift away from militarised responses to security challenges such as violent extremism, that not only tend to fail but also risk increasing radicalisation, as seen in countries such as Kenya, Somalia, [Libya and Iraq](#). Many of the drivers of conflict are addressed through [key Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) targets for peace](#) on access to justice, violence reduction, inclusive economic growth, fair access to social services, promotion of gender equality, as well as reduction of illicit financial and arms flows, which are often responsible for driving local war economies.

While the agenda's implementation will occur at national level, the new framework explicitly aims to 'enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships'. Connecting and leveraging existing global initiatives and platforms – including the 2030 Agenda and Africa's own Agenda 2063 – will be part of supporting national level action. The [Forum on China-Africa Cooperation \(FOCAC\)](#) has become a key initiative for deepened development cooperation between China and Africa, including on issues related to peace and security.

The upcoming heads of state [FOCAC Summit](#) to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, will be the sixth meeting of Chinese and African leadership and the second summit since the inception of FOCAC in 2000. FOCAC provides a real opportunity to enable African countries to make significant progress towards the peace-related targets in the 2030 Agenda.

Firstly, China and Africa's [shared commitment](#) to promote African peace and security and their acceptance of peace in the 2030 Agenda form a strong basis to build upon. Africa identified peace and security as one of five key pillars in the [Common African Position \(CAP\)](#) developed in the run up to the SDGs while China ultimately accepted Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies after its concerns were addressed. The promotion of peace and stability in Africa has been voiced at the [highest political level](#) in China. China's practical engagement on African peace and stability has [also increased over recent years](#) through financial [support](#) for the African Union (AU), deploying over [2,200 Chinese peacekeeping troops](#) in Africa, supporting [mediation efforts](#) in the South Sudan conflict and [linking its support for](#) economic growth in Africa as an important means to address the root causes of conflict.

Secondly, the next Action Plan of FOCAC, which provides the framework for cooperation between China and Africa over the next three years, could be an important tool for guiding China's support for implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Africa. Indeed, there are already many overlaps between many of the action-oriented commitments in the [existing Action Plan \(2013-15\)](#) and the outcome-oriented [SDG targets that promote peace](#). For example, the Initiative on China-Africa Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Security, which can be linked to target 16.1 on violence reduction and increased cooperation on legal and judicial issues, could also help achieve progress on target 16.3 on the rule of law and access to justice. China and Africa have also committed to cooperate on '[strengthening democracy and good governance](#)' in Africa, combatting transnational threats such as arms flows and transnational organised crime, and ensuring '[strengthened dialogue and exchanges in the area of human rights and reaffirmed respect for the principle of universality of human rights](#)'. All these issues are reflected in Goal 16's targets.

Thirdly, China's engagement on African peace and security has tended to be securitised and reactive, with most of the emphasis placed on military cooperation or the deployment of peacekeepers. Building on the preventive focus of the 2030 Agenda, China and Africa could use this summit as an opportunity to promote a more holistic and preventive approach to promoting peace in Africa by focusing on the underlying structural and systemic drivers of conflict in a more effective way in the next FOCAC Action Plan. This would mean addressing some gaps. For example, key issues for sustainable peace addressed in the SDG targets – including corruption and violence against women and girls – are not reflected in the current action plan. Furthermore, an area of fruitful discussion could focus on how Beijing could move beyond rhetoric and support *inclusive* economic growth and development that could concretely contribute to reducing [known root drivers](#) of conflict.

Finally, above and beyond FOCAC, and in line with the 2030 Agenda's call for multi-stakeholder implementation, China and African countries could also think strategically about how their existing partnership could be used to create a more rules-based, equitable international order conducive to peaceful societies. For example, what actions can they take to encourage the world to collectively address the issue of illicit financial flows and to make the arms trade more responsible? What leadership roles can they take within the United Nations to bring a more holistic approach to that multilateral organisation's [preventive capacities](#)?

In our globalised world the opportunity for FOCAC to forge an ever-stronger partnership between the largest developing country, China, and the continent with the most developing countries, Africa, could prove indispensable for solving collective challenges.

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